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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 26, 2006

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GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER DIRECTS STATE AGENCIES TO REDOUBLE PUBLIC SAFETY EFFORTS DURING HEAT WAVE

SACRAMENTO - Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger today directed state agencies to continue efforts to ensure public safety during the statewide heat wave.

"The summer heat wave continues to be dangerous as California has seen record-breaking, consecutive days of triple-digit temperatures. I have ordered state agencies to maintain vigilance to protect Californians by working with local health officials to ensure that nursing homes continue to protect their patients. And a mobilized force of local workers will continue to knock on doors and make phone calls to protect our vulnerable residents who may be exposed to the relentless heat," said Governor Schwarzenegger. "All Californians should look in on their elderly, disabled or at-risk neighbors to make sure they are OK."

In his directive, Governor Schwarzenegger instructed the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) to contact every nursing home and residential care facility to verify that each facility is protecting health and safety during the heat wave, has an evacuation plan and understands what to do in an emergency. This will be the second time this week that CDHS has made contact with these facilities caring for at-risk residents.

Additionally, the Governor directed the Department of Social Services to contact county welfare directors and county public health officers immediately and conduct onsite safety checks of each resident living in single-room occupancy hotels. These visits will be coordinated with In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) workers who provide assistance to vulnerable seniors and persons with disabilities who do not live in residential care facilities. Approximately 290,000 IHSS workers provide personal assistance to about 375,000 low-income seniors and persons with disabilities across California.

To supplement cooling centers established by counties and local community-based organizations, Governor Schwarzenegger directed the California Department of Food and Agriculture to make every state-owned fairground a cooling center.

The Department of Consumer Affairs has also established a toll-free number, 1-800-952-5210, to help residents find the nearest cooling center. The information is also available at www.oes.ca.gov.

In the event of a medical emergency, Californians should immediately call 911.

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Signs of Heat Stroke and Heat Exhaustion

Two common problems are heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Heat stroke occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature. The body's temperature rises rapidly, the sweating mechanism fails and the body is unable to cool down. Body temperature may rise to 106°F or higher. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not given. Heat exhaustion is the body's response to an excessive loss of water and salt contained in sweat. Those most prone to heat exhaustion are seniors and people working or exercising in a hot environment.

Warning signs of heat stroke vary, but may include:

- An extremely high body temperature (above 103°F, orally)
- Unconsciousness
- Dizziness, nausea and confusion
- Red, hot and dry skin (no sweating)
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Throbbing headache

Warning signs of heat exhaustion vary, but may include:

- Heavy sweating
- Muscle cramps
- Weakness
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Paleness, tiredness or dizziness.

What to Do

If you see any of these signs, you may be dealing with a life-threatening emergency. Have someone call for immediate medical assistance while you begin cooling the victim:

- Get medical assistance as soon as possible.
- Get the victim to a shady area.
- Cool the victim rapidly using whatever methods you can. For example, immerse the victim in a tub of cool water; place in a cool shower; spray with cool water from a garden hose; sponge with cool water; or if the humidity is low, wrap the victim in a cool, wet sheet and fan him or her vigorously.
- Monitor body temperature and continue cooling efforts until the body temperature drops to 101 to 102°F.
- If emergency medical personnel are delayed, call the hospital emergency room for further instructions.
- Do not give the victim alcohol to drink.

Sometimes a victim's muscles will begin to twitch uncontrollably as a result of heat stroke. If this happens, keep the victim from injuring himself, but do not place any object in the mouth and do not give fluids. If there is vomiting, make sure the airway remains open by turning the victim on his or her side.

These self-help measures are not a substitute for medical care, but may help you recognize and respond promptly to warning signs of trouble. Your best defense against heat-related illness is prevention. Staying cool and making simple changes in your fluid intake, activities and clothing during hot weather can help you remain safe and healthy.